

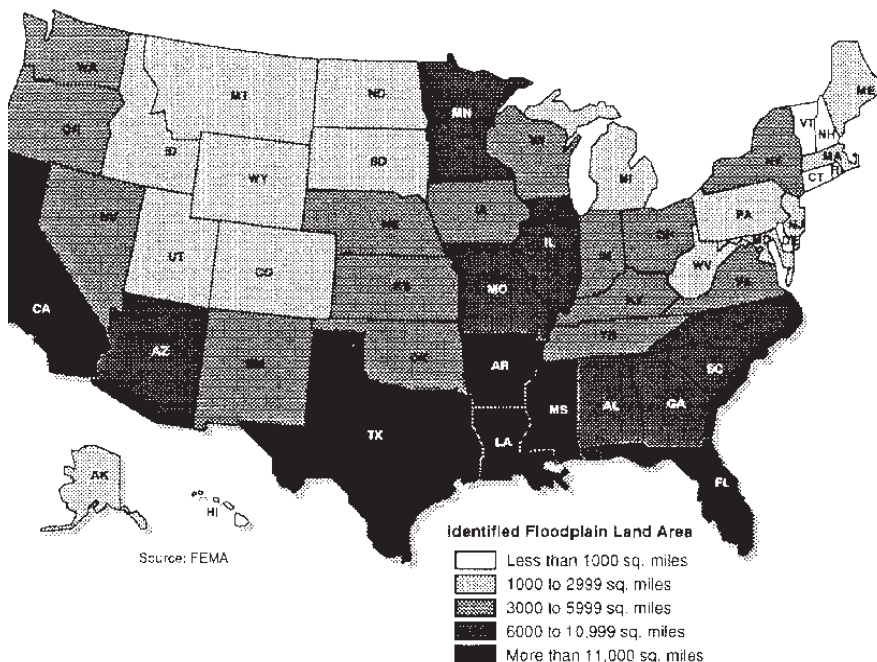
BACKGROUND

FLOODS AND FLASH FLOODS

EMERGENCY INFORMATION

1. Flood waters can be extremely dangerous. The force of six inches of swiftly moving water can easily knock people off their feet and carry them away. The best protection during a flood is to leave the area and go to shelter on higher ground.
2. Flash flood waters move at very fast speeds and can roll boulders, tear out trees, destroy buildings, and obliterate bridges. Walls of water can reach heights of 10 to 20 feet and generally are accompanied by trees, rocks, and other debris. The best response to any signs of flash flooding is to move immediately and quickly to higher ground.
3. Cars can easily be swept away in just two feet of moving water. If flood waters rise around a car, it should be abandoned. Passengers should climb immediately to higher ground.

DANGER ZONES



Floods and flash floods occur within all 50 states. Communities particularly at risk are those located in low-lying areas, near water, or downstream from a dam.

WHAT IS A FLOOD?

Floods are the most common and widespread of all natural disasters – except fire. Most communities in the United States can experience some kind of flooding after spring rains, heavy thunderstorms, or spring thaws. Floods can be slow- or fast-rising, but generally develop over a period of days.

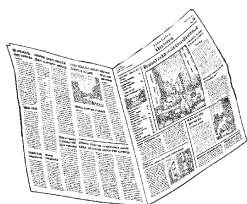
Dam failures are potentially the worst flash flood events. A dam failure is usually the result of neglect, poor design, or structural damage caused by a major event such as an earthquake. When a dam fails, a gigantic quantity of water is suddenly let loose downstream, destroying anything in its path.

WHAT IS A FLASH FLOOD?

According to the National Weather Service, flash flooding is a rapid rise in water levels associated with heavy rainfall or the failure of a dam or ice jam.

HELP YOUR COMMUNITY GET READY

The media can raise awareness about floods and flash floods by providing important information to the community. Here are some suggestions:

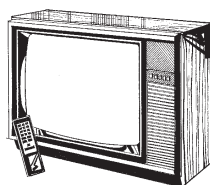


1. Publish a special section in your local newspaper with emergency information on floods and flash floods. Localize the information by describing recent or past floods in your area and printing the phone numbers of local emergency services offices, the American Red Cross, and the nearest hospitals.

2. Interview local officials about land use management and building codes in floodplains.



3. Work with the National Weather Service, local emergency services and American Red Cross officials to find out what you can do before a flood or flash flood occurs.



4. Periodically inform your community of local public warning systems.

DID YOU KNOW...

- Individuals and business owners can protect themselves from flood losses by purchasing flood insurance through the National Flood Insurance Program. Homeowners policies do not cover flood damage. Information is available through local insurance agents and emergency offices.
- Flooding has caused the deaths of more than 10,000 people since 1900. Property damage from flooding now totals over \$3.5 billion each year in the United States.
- More than 2,200 lives were lost as a result of the Johnstown, Pennsylvania, flood of 1889. This flood was caused by an upstream dam failure.
- Seventy-five percent of presidential disaster declarations result from natural phenomena in which flooding was a major component.
- On July 31, 1976, the Big Thompson River near Denver overflowed after an extremely heavy storm. A wall of water 19 feet high roared down the Big Thompson Canyon, where many people were camping. One hundred forty people perished and millions of dollars worth of property was lost.

HOW THE PUBLIC CAN HELP AFTER A DISASTER

When disaster strikes, people everywhere want to help those in need. To ensure that this compassion and generosity are put to good use, the media can highlight these facts:

- *Financial aid is an immediate need of disaster victims. Financial contributions should be made through a recognized voluntary organization to help ensure that contributions are put to their intended use.*

- *Before donating food or clothing, wait for instructions from local officials.*

Immediately after a disaster, relief workers usually don't have the time or facilities to set up distribution channels, and too often these items go to waste.

- *Volunteers should go through a recognized voluntary agency such as the American Red Cross or the Salvation Army. They know what is needed and are prepared to deal with the need. Local emergency services officials also coordinate volunteer efforts for helping in a disaster.*